

## **Village of Ardsley / Conservation and Environmental Advisory Committee**

### **Inaugural Annual Report for July 2019 to May 2020**

In late 2018 conversations were initiated with the Mayor and Trustees regarding formation of a council in Ardsley abiding by NY State Law for conservation advisories (commonly referred to as 'CAC'). CACs are encouraged to form in each of 1,600 NY State municipalities under Article 12-F Section 239-x and -y of NYS General Municipal Law (see ([council -x](#) and/or [board -y](#))). The law provides that CACs may be established by ordinance or by local law and is composed of 3-9 volunteer residents appointed by the local governing board. NY CAC fact sheets add the following guidelines: CACs are encouraged to appoint student members; it is recommended that students be at least sixteen. Members are volunteers with interest in the mission of the CAC, the time and willingness to work on CAC priorities, and willingness and ability to work cooperatively with municipal agencies. Volunteer members may have knowledge and experience in the environmental sciences, planning, engineering, and law; however, there are no minimum professional qualifications. CAC members should have an eagerness to learn and attend training and comparable programs to build their knowledge and skills.

The Village of Ardsley established the **Ardsley Conservation and Environmental Advisory Committee by resolution of the Village of Ardsley Board of Trustees on July 1, 2019** and appointed one member as Chair. (See members on page 9 and resolution in minutes for July 1, 2019, Section VI.1.) A Board Trustee Liaison to CEAC was defined and continues to be a key resource for the committee. The mission of the committee for the inaugural year was defined as:

The Conservation & Environment Committee (CEAC) will work to educate and advise the Village of Ardsley including Board of Trustees, Village Hall, officials, residents, businesses, and school district on effective (policy priorities and) preservation of natural resources so that each may contribute as exceptional stewards towards a sustainable Village environment.

Prior to July 2019, guidance and recommendations were provided from mentors in partner organizations including local CACs in the region, climate scientists and experts, County organizations including FCWC, ELLA, NYSACC, Sustainable Westchester, members of the Ardsley EAC 2008-2010, and the County Office for Energy Conservation and Sustainability. The guidance of leaders in these organizations continues to be valuable to CEAC especially given efforts to mitigate the climate crisis and develop climate adaptation through resilience.

Board appointments of members were made in October and December 2019, and January and April 2020 with the addition of a co-Chair and an additional six members through June 2020. One member is a Village coordinator. Three of these five members were students from the Ardsley High School; they were appointed for 2019-20.

**Two goals were approved by the Mayor and Trustee Liaison on September 12, 2019 for the committee's first year:**

Goal 1: To **promote reduction of CO2 equivalent greenhouse gases (GHGs)** especially for transportation, waste, and buildings sectors in keeping with land use best practices.

- Education and actions about food supplies and food waste, ecosystem protection especially for pollinators and natural resources, climate education, and land use best practices were all determined to be complementary factors to emissions reduction.
- CEAC aimed to determine baseline measurements, assess measurement tools for CEAC use, and foster GHG reductions of at least 5 - 10% per person annually over a five-year horizon to bring the Village in range of targets defined by the landmark NY State law adopted in Summer 2019: the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

Goal 2: To **establish collaborations and define programming** to inform and engage the local community given CEAC's mission.

- Achievement of the goal depended on **development of strong partnerships** among volunteers of local committees with elected officials, school and municipal staff, local CAC peers, educational and non-governmental institutions including PTAs, and local businesses.
- Awareness about CEAC in the Village was also focused on supporting and **expanding committee member participation**.

**Listed below is a timeline of selected activities for the year and outcomes matching each of the above two goals:**

(Listed by goal and the primary categories and stakeholders.)

### **1. Promote and foster reduction in Village greenhouse gas (GHGs) emissions**

The most critical work of the committee for 2019-20 was advisory preparation for the Board of Trustees 2Q to 3Q 2020 review of Community Choice Aggregation. The CCA provided the greatest single annual action yielding reduction of CO2 equivalent emissions.

#### **Plan and measure**

- Plan:
  1. The CEAC researched a variety of models to better understand how best to advise the Village on local solutions to mitigate climate change and improve local laws and practices. Selection of a toolkit and licensing were to be defined for the Village 2020-21 or 2021-22 budget.
    - Favored models (updated during or after 2018) included IPCC 48th Session Report, Drawdown, The Climate Reality Project, and regional and state Climate Action Plans,
- Measurement:
  1. Several measurement tools were researched from sources including NYSEERDA, NYDEC, NYS CLCPA committee consultants, the U.S. EPA, ICLEI, NOAA, Cool Climate (supporting the EPA and Nature Conservancy), and Sustainable Westchester / Westchester Power. Challenges to reports from these groups were adversely influenced by the U.S. executive branch in the CEAC's first year. The summit on March 5, 2020 provided information on tools used by a variety of organizations.
  2. At the Board's request, CEAC determined that:
    - approximately 1,100 households (after two notices / rounds of opt outs) participate in the CCA managed by Westchester Power
    - CEAC received updates from Westchester Power that CCA reduces Village emissions by approximately 3,100 metric tons per year.
  3. Trustee Liaison contributed by supporting CEAC development.

- He received advisory recommendations from CEAC regarding land use. Memos were discussed and revised as CEAC developed an understanding of NY DEC actions.
- CEAC contributed comments in review of the draft Village Comprehensive Plan and provided input on Village communications roles and responsibilities.

## **2. Community relationships and collaborations by stakeholder:**

### **School district staff & students**

#### **Planning, development, and outcomes:**

- School district team collaborations with CEAC started with Ardsley High School’s Environmental Task Force (AHS ETF).
  - Several activities were produced or supported throughout the year.
  - First with students in AHS ETF partnering with CEAC to educate freshmen at the September 2019 orientation on recycling throughout the building. Ardsley Cares Day planting and recycling projects took place in October 2019.
  - A climate rally initiated by an AMS student and joined AHS students was held in December 2019 at Pascone Park. Speakers included NY State Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Ardsley’s Mayor, many district students, CEAC members, and more. Residents and school district leaders from the Rivertowns participated.
  - A joint panel presentation in March 2020 as the NY State ban on single use plastic bags took effect. Westchester County Legislators Mary Jane Shimsky and Nancy Barr and Federated Conservationists of Westchester County (FCWC) Director Anne Jaffee Holmes spoke to a full audience at the AHS library about the ban, social justice considerations, and economic factors.
- CEAC arranged meetings and tours with elementary schools in Dobbs Ferry and Scarsdale to understand their models for development and implementation for food scrap diversion.
  - The model and partnership opportunities with teams, including small businesses that contract to implement and manage the program, were presented at the Ardsley Concord Road Elementary School (CRS) in collaboration with the school Principal, Assistant Principal, and teacher leaders on the school-wide civics program.
  - Food scrap diversion programs for CRS were put on hold as NY State Executive Orders required vacating school grounds due to COVID-19.
- In February 2020 CEAC and AHS ETF joined to support the civics program because the CRS student body voted to focus on the environment as their year-long project. Collaborations extended to productions that brought AHS ETF students to present to the elementary school student body.
- The final in-person events collaborating with AUFSD were Wellness Fairs at AMS and CRS in early March 2020. Activities educating students and staff about recycling and safe/unsafe use of pesticides in the global food supply. The AHS Wellness Fair was cancelled due to the pandemic.
- Also cancelled were Externships for three AHS seniors. Volunteer CEAC partnerships with a farm sanctuary and land use farm organizations had been arranged. The program was cancelled due to the NY State Executive Orders for COVID-19.

#### **Sample activities:**

September & December 2019

AHS freshmen orientation presentation on recycling by the AHS ETF & AUFSD student Climate Rally at Pascone Park led by an AMS student



October 2019  
CEAC tour by Dobbs Ferry elementary school garden & food scrap diversion parent leader



February 2020

Civics celebration of our Village environment with Ardsley elementary and high school students and staff, and CEAC committee leaders



March 2020

Westchester County Legislators & FCWC Director:  
Single-use Plastic Bag Ban Panel at AHS



**Stakeholder: Ardsley community and local leaders**  
**Planning, development, and outcomes:**

Here are a selection of opportunities developed to engage the community and develop a strategic lens into policy priorities in advisory and/or collaboration with the Village Board of Trustees, Village Hall, and partner organizations including the AUFSD PTA, Rivertown CACs and Sustainability task forces, NY DEC / NYSERDA, the Greenburgh Nature Center (GNC), and experts.

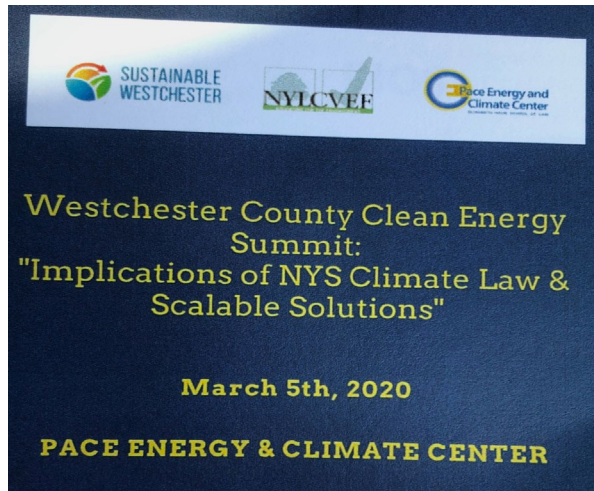
- In early September 2019 CEAC met with AUFSD Superintendent for discussion on shared priorities. The topics included Complete Streets policy and design for a walkable school district, solar canopy projects for district parking lots, recycling and food scrap diversion, and CO2 equivalent emissions reductions.
- CEAC provided meeting times for expert speakers on pertinent topics. For example presentations included November 2019 Food Scrap Diversion & Backyard Composting by GNC Director of Sustainability and in February 2020 Feeding People in a Time of Climate Change by local food expert Lori Fontanes.
- Deputy Commissioner Lou Vetrone of Westchester County Environmental Facilities conducted presentations on the model and campaign for 'Recycle Right' at the Yonkers recycling facility in November 2019 attended by CEAC co-chair, Ryan Schoenfeld Superintendent of the Ardsley School District (AUFSD) and Joe Urbanowicz AUFSD Director of Operations attended the team sessions.
  - From November 2019 to February 2020, CEAC members work with the Commissioner Vetrone's office and the Ardsley Village Hall and DPW teams to analyze information that may improve the value of recyclables processed by the county. AUFSD recyclables were segmented to learn more about that waste stream.
- CEAC teamed to support the PTA in October 2019 for Ardsley Cares Day planting and same day ecosystem clean up at AMS. Also in early 2020 CEAC and AHS ETF volunteered to educate and demonstrate recycling best practices at a PTA fundraiser with performances by the Harlem Wizards. And CEAC similarly supported the AMDI at their Committee Lunar New Year of the Ox celebration.
- CEAC teamed with Village Hall to review CEAC programs and capital budgets relevant to buildings and transportation initiatives. At the same time the same team gathered to plan community events to celebrate the April 2020 50th Anniversary of Earth Day in the United States. Event plans for Earth Day were cancelled due to the pandemic and the shifts were too abrupt to plan events online.
  - A durable outcome of the planning was initial integration of Zero Waste best practices for Village event production. Materials including vendor contracts were secured and modified to ease implementation and use by Village Hall staff.
- Four times per year leaders and members of local CACs in the six Villages with the Town of Greenburgh met to share best practices and formulate strategies. These InterVillage leader meetings continued periodically via video conference or outdoors after pandemic orders.
  - Regular meetings were also convened with a subset of the InterVillage group and the team at Greenburgh Nature Center to focus on food scrap diversion programs and the potential for curbside pick up. Town of Greenburgh DPW attended to review work in progress on potential route development. Surveys of residents by community were completed. Ardsley residents were surveyed by the CEAC via the Village eBlast. Response was favorable with over 100 participating residents.
  - A collaborative outcome of the InterVillage group was the presentation of a Rivertowns' Pollinator Forum. That event was the origin of several local pollinator pathway endeavors including the Ardsley Pollinator Pathway initiative.
- CACs and environmental organizations in Westchester have frequently taken up considerations on the use of fossil fuel powered small machinery such as leaf blowers, grass mowers, snow blowers, landscape trimmers, and related equipment. CEAC consulted

with the Mayor near the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020 as CACs in Sleepy Hollow and Villages in the Town of Greenburgh were again concerned about well documented pollution hazards for resident and work respiratory health, noise pollution exacerbating school/work-at-home shifts given state executive orders, and the significant damage to ecosystems for pollinators and other wildlife. Two temporary orders banning the use of some lawn equipment were ordered.

**Sample activities:**

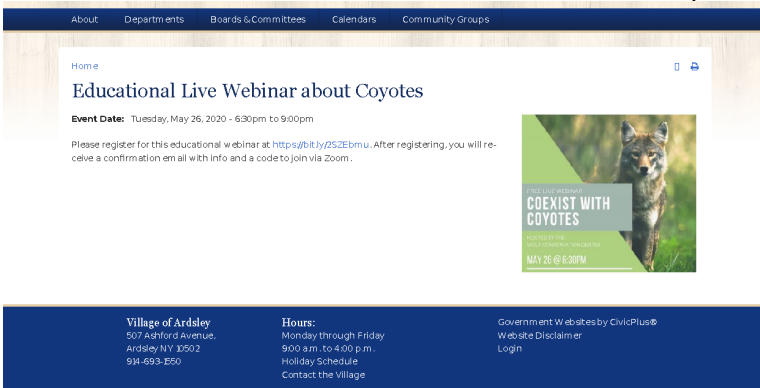
February & March 2020

Rivertowns' Pollinator Forum featuring Ardsley native plant gardener Carol Sommerfield & final 2020 in-person gathering of experts attended by both CEAC & Village Hall team



**May 2020**

via Zoom video conference: Webinar about Coyotes. Presented by the Outreach Specialists from the nearby [Wolf Conservation Center](#). Interest among Westchester residents was piqued as local coyote movements shifted due to a reduction in traffic in the pandemic.



**SUMMARY**

**Outcomes**

- CEAC prioritized exploration of the best levers for emissions reduction initiatives and to develop an understanding of measurement tools.

- In-person community engagement up until the pandemic proved to be a wonderful use of time and resources as CEAC could then draw upon those connections to build momentum for 2020-21 programs.

Look ahead

- Securing licensing of a measurement methodology and tool kit will be key for emissions reductions. CEAC anticipates that the ICLEI license will be the best fit.
- CEAC will continue to anchor its strategy, goals, and programs on policy and community priorities for consistent and targeted actions to reduce CO2 equivalent emissions and preserve Village and regional ecosystems and natural resources with policy and community programming recommendations to the Board of Trustees, Village Hall, Ardsley residents, businesses, and school district. As per NY CLCPA, emissions reductions are known to be most significantly impacted with building and transportation sectors.
- A clear and consistent calendar of communications with the community is a top priority for engagement.
- Committee volunteer contributions are highly valued. CEAC anticipates forming a steering committee and expanding project-based member participation. CEAC is also focused on succession planning given the guidance of the NYS General Municipal Law for CACs.

**2019-20 CEAC**

Chair	Eda Kapsis, Ardsely resident volunteer
co-Chair	Asha Bencosme, Ardsely resident volunteer
Member	Lorraine Kuhn, Village Hall Stormwater Management Coordinator
Member	Annie Garrity, Ardsley resident volunteer
Member	Dave Lew, Ardsley resident volunteer
Member	Carol Sommerfield, Ardsley resident volunteer
Student members	Adeel Arif, Owen Kapsis, Mukund Murthy (AHS Seniors)

Mayor	Nancy Kaboolian
Trustee Liaison	Evan Yager
Trustees	Andy DiJusto, Joanne D'Emilio, Steve Edelstein
Village Manager	Meredith Robson

Collaborating with CEAC

Key Village staff	Charles Hessler succeeding Hafiz Akram, Confidential Secretary
	Ann Marie Rocco, Village Clerk communications
	Rick Thompson, DPW